

Application No. 09/852,336
Office Action Date: 12/22/2004
Reply to Office Action mailed: 00/00/0000

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

1. SUMMARY

In the Office Action mailed December 22, 2004, the Examiner rejected claims 76 – 118 and 120 – 147. In addition, the Examiner objected to claims 83, 116 and 147.

In this Reply, claims 76, 79, 83, 86, 93, 100, 102, 113, 116, 117, 120, 121, 128, 134 and 147 have been amended, and claims 78 and 99 have been canceled. Claims 148 and 149 have been newly added. Accordingly, claims 76 – 77, 79 – 98, 100 – 118, 120 – 149 remain pending in the application.

2. RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS TO CLAIMS 83, 116, 147

In response to the Examiner's objection to claims, 83, 116 and 147, Applicant has amended claims 83, 116 and 147 to correct the informalities identified by the Examiner.

3. RESPONSE TO § 112 REJECTIONS

In the Office Action mailed December 22, 2004, the Examiner objected to claims 120 and 121 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter, which Applicant regards as the invention. In response, Applicant has amended claims 120 and 121. Applicant submits that the amendment overcomes the Examiner's rejection.

4. RESPONSE TO § 102 REJECTIONS

In the Office Action mailed December 22, 2004, the Examiner rejected claims 76 – 79, 81 – 83, 86 – 88, 90 - 91 and 131 – 132 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,115,709 to Gilmour et al. (hereinafter, "Gilmour"). The Examiner rejected claims 102 – 105, 108 – 110, 112, 117 – 118, 122 – 124 and 143 - 146 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,175,831 to

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Weinreich et al. (hereinafter, "Weinreich"). In addition, the Examiner rejected claims 134 – 138 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,884,270 to Walker et al. (hereinafter, "Walker").

To anticipate a claim, the reference must teach every element of the claim. "A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference." Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987).

Independent claim 76 is not anticipated by Gilmour, because Gilmour does not disclose each and every limitation of claim 76.

Claim 76, as amended, states:

76. A computer-implemented method, comprising reporting matches to search criteria according to whether or not a degree of inter-person connection between a searcher and a potential target is within a specified connection threshold, wherein the degree of inter-person connection is defined according to one or more person-to-person trusted relationships which exist in a chain of such inter-person connections between the searcher and the potential target.

(Claim 76, as amended, emphasis added). According to claim 76, matches are reported according to whether or not a degree of inter-person connection is within a specified connection threshold. Furthermore, the degree of inter-person connection is defined according to one or more person-to-person trusted relationships.

In contrast, Gilmour refers to a method for identifying potential recipients of an email based on a "degree of correspondence" between terms in the email and terms in one or more user profiles. In particular, Gilmour states:

There is also taught a computer-implemented method and apparatus for addressing an electronic document, such as an e-mail message, for transmission over a computer network. The e-mail message may be

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examined to identify terms therein. The identified terms are then compared to a number of user knowledge profiles with a view to detecting a predetermined degree of correspondence between the identified terms and any one or more of the user knowledge profiles. In the event that a predetermined degree of correspondence is detected, the sender of the electronic document is prompted to either accept or decline the proposed recipient as an actual recipient of the electronic document, after first being offered an opportunity to inspect the specific basis of the correspondence between the identified terms and the proposed recipients. The e-mail message may also be parsed to extract recipients entered manually by the user. The degree of correspondence between the knowledge profiles of the manually entered recipients and the identified terms of the message is then optionally used as the basis of recommendations to the user that certain manually entered recipients be dropped from the ultimate list of recipients.

(Gilmour, Col. 5, Lines 36 – 57).

According to Gilmour, the “degree of correspondence” refers to the relationship between a threshold value and a “matching metric.” Gilmour defines a “matching metric” as a sum of weighted confidence values, which are numerical representations of a degree of correspondence between a term’s appearance in an electronic document and a user’s profile, which is made up of a weighted list of such terms. Consequently, according to Gilmour, potential recipients of an email are identified according to a “degree of correspondence” between terms in an email and terms in their (i.e., the potential recipient’s) user profile. This “degree of correspondence” does not refer to an inter-personal relationship between two individuals, but only to the relationship between one person’s query term and another person’s list of terms of interest.

Gilmour, thus, does not disclose or suggest “reporting matches ... according to whether or not a degree of inter-person connection between a searcher and a potential target is within a specified connection threshold,

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wherein the degree of inter-person connection is defined according to one or more person-to-person trusted relationships," as is recited in claim 76. Consequently, Applicant submits that Gilmour does not anticipate independent claim 76. Furthermore, for the same reason, Applicant submits that Gilmour does not anticipate dependent claims 77 – 85, 125 – 127 and 131 – 132, which are dependent upon claim 76.

Independent claim 86 is not anticipated by Gilmour, because Gilmour does not disclose each and every limitation of claim 86.

Claim 86, as amended, states:

86. A computer-implemented method, comprising reporting potential matches to search criteria so as to include information regarding degrees of inter-person connection between a searcher and each individual represented by the potential matches, wherein the individuals represented by the potential matches are within a specified connection distance from the searcher, and each degree of inter-person connection is defined according to a person-to-person trusted relationship.

(Claim 86, as amended, emphasis added). According to claim 86, a degree of inter-person connection refers to the number of person-to-person connections (e.g., people) between a searcher and a target.

As noted above, Gilmour refers to reporting a "degree of correspondence" between terms in an email and terms in a user profile. In addition, Gilmour states:

The user dialog 440 shown in FIG. 18D presents the list of potential recipients in a "potential recipients" scrolling window442, wherein the names of potential recipients are grouped into levels or ranked classes according to the strength of the matching metric.

(Gilmour, Col. 23, Lines 21 – 25, emphasis added).

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Accordingly, Gilmour describes grouping, or ranking, potential recipients of an email according to a "matching metric." Gilmour defines a "matching metric" as a sum of weighted confidence values, which are numerical representations of a "degree of correspondence" between a term's appearance in an electronic document and a user's profile. Consequently, according to Gilmour, potential recipients of an email are grouped, or ranked, according to a "degree of correspondence" between terms in an email, and terms in each potential recipient's user profile.

In contrast to claim 86, Gilmour does not disclose or suggest "reporting potential matches to search criteria so as to include information regarding degrees of inter-person connection between a searcher and each individual . . . , wherein the individuals . . . are within a specified connection distance from the searcher, and each degree of inter-person connection is defined according to a person-to-person trusted relationship." Consequently, Applicant submits that Gilmour does not anticipate independent claim 86. For the same reason, Applicant submits that Gilmour does not anticipate dependent claims 87 – 92 and 131 - 132, which are dependent upon claim 86.

Independent claims 102 and 117 are not anticipated by Weinrich, because Weinrich does not disclose each and every limitation of claims 102 and 117.

Claim 102, as amended, states:

102. A computer-implemented system comprising a software broker configured to report matches to search criteria established by a searcher, the matches representing individuals having personal profiles that satisfy one or more of the search criteria, the personal profiles having been established using contact and relationship management tools to enter contact information and describe relationships to those contacts, said tools provided by the computer-implemented system and further configured to organize said contacts into categories; said matches being reported if

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individuals represented thereby are within a *specified* contact threshold.

(Claim 102, as amended, emphasis added). Claim 102 refers to a software broker to report matches to search criteria established by a searcher, "if individuals ... are within a **specified** contact threshold."

Weinreich discloses a system that allows a user to search for other members to whom the user is connected, directly or indirectly. For example, Weinreich states:

Referring to FIG. 15, another preferred embodiment using DSP 12 of the present invention is illustrated which allows a member to search for other members that he is connected to directly or indirectly by defined relationships confirmed to be valid, based on one or more of the criteria entered in the member's personal profile (see FIG. 11). For example, selected criteria may include, among other variations, one of (i) geography; (ii) occupation and geography; (iii) hobby and geography, and (iv) skill and geography. It should be noted that the criteria may be general or more specific. For example, for geographical information, the user may specify the state or, more specifically, the city of the person to be searched. It is also possible the criteria could include organizations such as alumni clubs or place of employment.

(Weinreich, Col. 20, Lines 41 – 54).

However, in contrast to claim 102, Weinreich does not disclose or suggest allowing a user to limit a search to include only those members within a specified contact, or connection, threshold. Specifically, Weinreich does not disclose or suggest "a software broker to report matches to search criteria established by a searcher... if [the] individuals represented [by the matches] are within a **specified** contact threshold," as is recited in claim 102. Consequently, Applicant submits that Weinreich does not anticipate independent claim 102. For the same reason, Applicant submits that Weinrich does not anticipate

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independent claim 117. Furthermore, Applicant submits that Weinreich does not anticipate dependent claims 103 – 104 and 143 – 145, dependent upon claim 102, and dependent claims 118 and 120 – 121, dependent upon claim 117.

Independent claim 105 is not anticipated by Weinrich, because Weinrich does not disclose each and every limitation of claim 105.

Claim 105 states:

105. A computer-implemented method, comprising autonomously brokering connections between a searcher and a target so as to provide information regarding inter-personal connections between the searcher and the target according to access control instructions of individuals represented by the inter-personal connections regarding levels of details of themselves and their contacts that may be shared with others.

(Claim 105, emphasis added). Accordingly, claim 105 refers to providing information (e.g., from a user profile) “according to access control instructions ... regarding levels of details ... that may be shared with others.”

Weinreich does not disclose or suggest providing information at a particular level of detail according to access control instructions. Instead, Weinreich suggests that the entire profile of any person may be displayed. Specifically, Weinreich states:

If matches are found in step 1057, the number of matches is counted in step 1058. , Next, routine Name_Get_WP_List is called. In step 1058B, the total number of matches and all or a part of the search results are shown. The number of results shown may be any number, but is preferably ten. **The user may display the profile of any person on the list of results by clicking on the displayed name which brings up screen 1053C.** This is done in a manner that is well known. Similar to steps 1053A-B, a new or modified search may be selected at steps 1057A, 1058B and 1058C.

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(Weinreich, Col. 20, Lines 19 – 29, emphasis added).

In contrast to claim 105, Weinreich does not disclose or suggest “provid[ing] information regarding inter-personal connections between [a] searcher and [a] target according to access control instructions ... regarding levels of details ... that may be shared with others.” Consequently, Applicant submits that Weinreich does not anticipate independent claim 105. For the same reason, Applicant submits that Weinreich does not anticipate dependent claims 106 – 112, 122 – 124, 139 – 142, and 146 – 147, which are dependent upon claim 105.

Independent claim 134 is not anticipated by Walker, because Walker does not disclose each and every limitation of claim 134.

Claim 134, as amended, states:

134. A computer-implemented method, comprising integrating third party verification reports regarding user-created personal profiles with such profiles for use in a computer-implemented match-making system; and utilizing such verification reports in reporting matches to search criteria established by a searcher, **said matches based in part on strengths of relationship in associated chains of inter-person connection between the searcher, potential targets and verifiers, if any.**

(Claim 134, as amended, emphasis added). According to claim 134, “matches [are] based in part on strengths of relationship in associated chains of inter-person connection between [a] searcher, potential targets and verifiers, if any.”

Walker discloses a system that reports matches to search criteria. In particular, Walker states:

In response, central controller 200 searches database 255 for party data satisfying the search criteria (step 610). Controller 200 then transmits to requestor terminal 400 the results of the search, e.g., number of parties that it found to have party data satisfying the

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criteria (step 620). Alternatively, the number of parties would be transmitted to requestor terminal 400 along with pseudonyms for each of those parties.

(Walker, Col. 16, Lines 7 – 14, emphasis added).

In contrast to claim 134, Walker does not disclose or suggest “integrating third party verification reports ... for use in a computer-implemented match-making system; and utilizing such verification reports in reporting matches ..., said matches based in part on strengths of relationship in associated chains of inter-person connection between the searcher, potential targets and verifiers, if any.” Consequently, Applicant submits that Walker does not anticipate independent claim 134. For the same reason, Applicant submits that Walker does not anticipate dependent claims 135 – 138, which are dependent upon claim 134.

For the reason stated above, Applicant submits that the Examiner’s rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) has been overcome. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the claims be allowed.

5. RESPONSE TO § 103 REJECTIONS

In the Office Action mailed December 22, 2004, the Examiner rejected claims 80 and 92 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and U.S. Patent No. 6,567,784 to Bukow (hereinafter, “Bukow”). The Examiner rejected claims 84 – 85, 89, 107, 125 – 127 and 147 under 103(a) as being obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and Weinreich. The Examiner rejected claims 93 – 101, 106, 115 – 116, 133, 139 – 142 under 103(a) as being obvious in view of the combination of Walker and Weinreich. In addition, the Examiner rejected claims 111, 113 – 114 as obvious in view of Weinreich and Bukow. Finally, the Examiner rejected claims 128 – 130 under 103(a) as being obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and U.S. Patent No. 5,729,735 to Meyering (hereinafter, “Meyering”).

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To establish a prima facie case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the prior art, and not based on applicant's disclosure. *In re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

Claims 80 and 92 are not obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and Bukow, because neither Gilmour nor Bukow, when considered singularly or in combination, discloses or suggests each and every limitation of claims 80 and 92.

Claim 80, which is dependent upon claim 76, includes all of the limitations of independent claim 76. In particular, claim 80 includes "reporting matches ... according to whether or not a degree of inter-person connection ... is within a specified connection threshold, wherein the degree of inter-person connection is defined according to one or more person-to-person trusted relationships," which Applicant has identified above as not being disclosed or suggested by Gilmour. Consequently, in order for claim 80 to be obvious in view of Gilmour and Bukow, Bukow must disclose the above limitation.

However, Bukow discloses matching projects with workers, but does not disclose or suggest, "reporting matches ... according to whether or not a degree of inter-person connection ... is within a specified connection threshold, wherein the degree of inter-person connection is defined according to one or more person-to-person trusted relationships." Therefore, Applicant submits that dependent claim 80 is not obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and Bukow.

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Claim 92, which is dependent upon claim 86, includes all of the limitations of independent claim 86. In particular, claim 92 includes, "reporting potential matches to search criteria so as to include information regarding degrees of inter-person connection ... wherein the individuals ... are within a specified connection distance from the searcher, and each degree of inter-person connection is defined according to a person-to-person trusted relationship," which Applicant has identified above as not being disclosed or suggested by Gilmour. Consequently, in order for claim 92 to be obvious in view of Gilmour and Bukow, Bukow must disclose the above limitation.

However, Bukow discloses matching projects with workers, but does not disclose or suggest "reporting potential matches to search criteria so as to include information regarding degrees of inter-person connection ... wherein the individuals ... are within a specified connection distance from the searcher, and each degree of inter-person connection is defined according to a person-to-person trusted relationship." Therefore, Applicant submits that dependent claim 92 is not obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and Bukow.

Claims 84 – 85, 89, 107, 125 – 127 and 147 are not obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and Weinreich, because neither Gilmour nor Weinreich, when considered singularly or in combination, discloses or suggests each and every limitation of claims 84 – 85, 89, 107, 125 – 127 and 147.

Claims 84 – 85 and 125 – 127 are dependent upon claim 76, and therefore each of claims 84 – 85 and 125 - 127 includes all of the limitations of independent claim 76. In particular, each of claims 84 – 85 and 125 – 127 includes "reporting matches ... according to whether or not a degree of inter-person connection ... is within a specified connection threshold." Applicant submits that neither Gilmour nor Weinreich discloses or suggests "reporting matches ... according to whether or not a degree of inter-person connection ... is within a specified connection threshold." Therefore, Applicant submits that dependent claims 84 –

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85 and 125 – 127 are not obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and Weinreich.

Similarly, claim 89 is dependent upon claim 86. Accordingly, claim 89 includes “reporting potential matches to search criteria so as to include information regarding degrees of inter-person connection …, wherein the individuals … are within a specified connection distance from the searcher.” Applicant submits that neither Gilmour nor Weinreich discloses or suggests “reporting potential matches to search criteria so as to include information regarding degrees of inter-person connection …, wherein the individuals … are within a specified connection distance from the searcher.” Therefore, Applicant submits that claims 84 – 85 and 125 – 127 are not obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and Weinreich.

Claims 107 and 147 are dependent upon claim 105, and therefore each of claims 107 and 147 includes all of the limitations of independent claim 105. In particular, each of claims 107 and 147 includes “provid[ing] information regarding inter-personal connections between [a] searcher and [a] target according to access control instructions … regarding levels of details … that may be shared with others,” which Applicant has identified above as not being disclosed or suggested by Weinreich. Consequently, in order for claims 107 and 147 to be obvious in view of Gilmour and Weinreich, Gilmour must disclose the above limitation. However, Applicant submits that Gilmour does not disclose or suggest “provid[ing] information regarding inter-personal connections between [a] searcher and [a] target according to access control instructions … regarding levels of details … that may be shared with others.” Therefore, Applicant submits that dependent claims 107 and 147 are not obvious in view of the combination of Gilmour and Weinreich.

Claims 93 – 101, 106, 115 – 116, 133, 139 – 142 are not obvious in view of the combination of Walker and Weinreich, because neither Walker nor Weinreich, when considered singularly or in combination, discloses or

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suggests each and every limitation of claims 93 – 101, 106, 115 – 116, 133, 139 – 142.

Claim 93, as amended, states:

93. A computer-implemented method, comprising integrating third party verification reports regarding user-created personal profiles with such profiles for use in a computer-implemented match-making system; and utilizing such verification reports in reporting matches to search criteria established by a searcher, said matches being within a specified degree of inter-person connections between the searcher and an individual represented thereby, each degree of connection defined according to a person-to-person trusted relationship.

(Claim 93, as amended, emphasis added).

Walker discloses a system that reports matches to search criteria. However, Walker does not disclose or suggest “integrating third party verification reports … for use in a computer-implemented match-making system; and utilizing such verification reports in reporting matches … **within a specified degree of inter-person connections** between the searcher and an individual represented thereby, each degree of connection defined according to a person-to-person trusted relationship.”

Similarly, Weinreich discloses a system that allows a user to search for other members to whom the user is connected, directly or indirectly. However, Weinreich does not disclose or suggest allowing a user to limit a search to include only those members “**within a specified degree of inter-person connections.**”

Consequently, Applicant submits that neither Walker nor Weinreich discloses or suggests “integrating third party verification reports … for use in a computer-implemented match-making system; and utilizing such verification reports in reporting matches … **within a specified degree of inter-person connections** between the searcher and an individual represented thereby, each

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degree of connection defined according to a person-to-person trusted relationship." Therefore, Applicant submits that claims 93 – 101 are not obvious in view of the combination of Walker and Weinreich.

Claims 106 and 139 – 142 are dependent upon claim 105, and therefore each of claims 106 and 139 – 142 includes all of the limitations of independent claim 105. In particular, each of claims 106 and 139 – 142 includes "provid[ing] information regarding inter-personal connections between [a] searcher and [a] target according to access control instructions ... regarding levels of details ... that may be shared with others," which Applicant has identified above as not being disclosed or suggested by Weinreich. Consequently, in order for claims 106 and 139 – 142 to be obvious in view of Weinreich and Walker, Walker must disclose the above limitation.

However, Walker discloses a system that reports matches to search criteria, but Walker does not disclose or suggest integrating third party verification reports ... for use in a computer-implemented match-making system; and utilizing such verification reports in reporting matches ..., said matches based in part on strengths of relationship in associated chains of inter-person connection between the searcher, potential targets and verifiers, if any."

Claims 115 and 133, which are dependent upon claim 113, include all of the limitations of independent claim 113. In particular, claims 115 and 133 include "autonomously brokering a connection between a searcher and a target using contact lists of one or more connecting individuals in an inter-personal connection path between the searcher and the target in response to a search request including a specified degree of inter-person connection submitted by the searcher." In order for claims 115 and 133 to be obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich, Bukow and Walker, one of the references must disclose or suggest the above limitation.

However, although Weinreich, Bukow and Walker generally refer to performing searches based on search requests, none of the references disclose or

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suggest that the search request may be limited to include results within a specified degree of inter-person connection. Specifically, none of the references disclose or suggest "autonomously brokering a connection between a searcher and a target using contact lists of one or more connecting individuals in an interpersonal connection path between the searcher and the target in response to a search request including a specified degree of inter-person connection submitted by the searcher," as is included in claims 115 and 133. Therefore, Applicant submits that dependent claim 115 and 133 are not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich, Bukow and Walker.

Independent claim 116 states in part, "autonomously brokering a connection between a searcher and a target using contact lists of one or more connecting entities ... at least one of the connecting entities being an organization having a profile that is an aggregate of one or more individual profiles of members of the organization." In order for claim 116 to be obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Walker, either Weinreich or Walker must disclose or suggest the above limitation.

However, neither Weinreich nor Walker disclose or suggest brokering connections between connection entities wherein "at least one of the connecting entities [is] and organization having a profile that is an aggregate of one or more individual profiles." Therefore, Applicant submits that independent claim 116 is not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Walker.

Claims 111, 113 – 114 are not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Bukow, because neither Weinreich nor Bukow, when considered singularly or in combination, discloses or suggests each and every limitation of claims 111, 113 – 114.

Claim 111 is dependent upon claim 105 and therefore includes all of the limitations of independent claim 105. In particular, claim 111 includes "provid[ing] information regarding inter-personal connections between [a] searcher and [a] target according to access control instructions ... regarding

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levels of details ... that may be shared with others," which Applicant has identified above as not being disclosed by Weinreich. Therefore, in order for claim 111 to be obvious in view of Weinreich and Bukow, Bukow must disclose the above limitation.

However, Bukow does not disclose or suggest "provid[ing] information regarding inter-personal connections between [a] searcher and [a] target according to access control instructions ... regarding levels of details ... that may be shared with others." Consequently, Applicant submits that claim 111 is not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Bukow.

Claim 113 states in part, "autonomously brokering a connection between a searcher and a target using contact lists of one or more connecting individuals in an inter-personal connection path between the searcher and the target in response to a search request **including a specified degree of inter-person connection submitted by the searcher.**" In order for claims 113 to be obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Bukow, Either Weinreich or Bukow must disclose or suggest the above limitation.

However, Weinreich and Bukow generally refer to performing searches based on search requests, but neither reference discloses or suggests that the search request may be limited to include results within a specified degree of inter-person connection. Specifically, none of the references disclose or suggest "autonomously brokering a connection between a searcher and a target using contact lists of one or more connecting individuals in an inter-personal connection path between the searcher and the target in response to a search request **including a specified degree of inter-person connection submitted by the searcher,**" as is included in claims 113. Therefore, Applicant submits that independent claim 113 is not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Bukow. For the same reason, Applicant submits that dependent claim 114 is not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Bukow.

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Claims 128 – 130 are not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Meyering, because neither Weinreich nor Meyering, when considered singularly or in combination, discloses or suggests each and every limitation of claims 128 - 130.

Claim 128 states in part, “autonomously brokering a connection between a searcher and a target using contact lists of one or more connecting entities in a connection path between the searcher and the target in response to a search request including a specified inter-person connection threshold submitted by the searcher.” Therefore, in order for claim 128 to be obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Meyering, either Weinreich or Meyering must disclose or suggest the above limitation.

However, Weinreich generally refer to performing searches based on search requests, but does not disclose or suggest limiting search results by including in a search request a specified inter-person connection threshold. Simiarly, Meyering does not disclose or suggest limiting search results by including in a search request a specified inter-person connection threshold. Specifically, neither Weinreich nor Meyering disclose or suggest “autonomously brokering a connection between a searcher and a target using contact lists of one or more connecting entities in a connection path between the searcher and the target in response to a search request including a specified inter-person connection threshold submitted by the searcher,” as is recited in claim 128. Consequently, Applicant submits that claim 128 is not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Meyering. For the same reason, Applicant submits that dependent claims 129 – 130 are not obvious in view of the combination of Weinreich and Meyering.

For the reason stated above, Applicant submits that the Examiner’s rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) has been overcome. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the claims be allowed.

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6. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, Applicant submits that all of the objections and rejections asserted in the Office Action mailed December 22, 2004 have been overcome. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the claims are now in a condition for allowance, which is respectfully solicited.

Authorization is hereby given to charge our Deposit Account No. 02-2666 for any charges that may be due. Furthermore, if an extension is required, then Applicants hereby request such an extension.

Respectfully submitted,
BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN

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